



# Australian Bureau of Statistics

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## We're Ready for the 2001 Census

### We're Ready for the 2001 Census

By the Australian Statistician, Dennis Trewin

The 2001 Census of Population and Housing, on Tuesday 7 August, requires the support of all Australians. The information gathered on census night will provide critical information essential in building a better Australia. This Census has special significance corresponding with the Centenary of Federation.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics is striving to achieve the best possible outcome for the 2001 Census, in the interests of all Australians.

Census information is widely used in all spheres of government, as well as the private sector and communities, as an essential part of informed decision-making.

Population estimates based on the census assist in determining the amount of funding States and Territories receive from the Federal Government.

Census information is also used to determine the number of seats allocated to each State and Territory in the House of Representatives.

To commemorate the Centenary of Federation, everyone in Australia on census night will be given the option of having their personally-identified census information being kept in a 'time capsule' for 99 years. This information will be stored securely by the National Archives of Australia. All other personally-identified data from the census is destroyed after census processing is complete.

A Census Inquiry Service will operate from 28 July 2001 to assist with inquiries.

A new public information web site is also available at **[www.abs.gov.au/census](http://www.abs.gov.au/census)**

The ABS welcomes support of the Australian public in ensuring a successful 2001 Census.

I would urge everyone to set aside the time on census night to fill in their form.

## **The Census Comes to You**

### **The Census Comes to You**

In the 1800s, attempts to count the population were called "musters" - requiring communities to gather at specified locations to be counted. Musters were also used as a means of measuring food distribution and other supplies to the number of people who needed them.

Nowadays, the census comes to the people. The ABS has recruited approximately 30,000 collectors, the largest ever peace time recruitment of temporary staff, to travel wherever you may be, using the thousands of maps that have been produced.

To get the best possible picture of the population, the ABS goes to great lengths to ensure that all Australians are counted. Census collectors are dispatched in helicopters to highlands and islands in some of the remotest parts of the country while others are sent into mines, hospitals, hotels and even off-shore oil drilling platforms. Residents of all Australian Territories including the Cocos and Keeling Islands and Christmas Island are included in the census - even those in Antarctica!

## **Counting All Australians**

### **Counting All Australians**

How do you deliver a census form to someone who lives on the streets? How do you ensure that people who are not fluent in English understand the census questions? How do you count remote Indigenous communities?

The ABS is continuously looking to improve the quality of data collected in the census and, in 2001, we have developed special strategies to improve the quality of data for particular groups, including Indigenous people, ethnic groups and the homeless population.

### **Indigenous People**

Given the remoteness of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and their special characteristics, the ABS has developed an Indigenous Enumeration Strategy to be

implemented in the 2001 Census collection process.

These plans, developed in consultation with Indigenous people and associated organisations, centre on the appointment of special census field officers to work with Indigenous communities and elicit their assistance and support. In some remote areas, collector-interviewers may obtain census information by interview rather than via the standard census form. This strategy accommodates people who feel more comfortable communicating verbally, or who have literacy problems. A tailored communication strategy has also been developed to ensure Indigenous communities receive the information about the census and its importance.

### **Ethnic Groups**

In Australia's multicultural society, information about the census needs to be available to people who have difficulty speaking or reading English. The ABS has developed a strategy to ensure that ethnic groups are enumerated effectively. Incorporated in this strategy is paid media advertising, liaison with community leaders, translation of brochures into community languages and the provision of information to migrant resource centres.

The ABS also employs collectors who are able to speak languages other than English. It is expected that many people will use the census telephone interpreter service which has been established for the census collection period.

### **Homeless Australians**

The ABS works to continually improve collection strategies for individuals who live in boarding houses or refuges, as well as those who live on the streets. For the 2001 Census, senior collection staff have contacted agencies responsible for licensing accommodation likely to cater for the homeless in order to provide information and support. Organisations that provide other services for the homeless have also been contacted to identify possible sites where homeless people are likely to be located. Also, members of the homeless community will be engaged to enumerate difficult areas where significant numbers of homeless people are likely to spend census night.

Readers may be interested in the report from the 1996 Census Occasional Paper series titled **Census of Population and Housing - Counting the Homeless** (Cat. No. 2041.0).

## **Answers to frequently asked questions about the census!**

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#### **When will the Census forms be delivered and collected for the 2001 Census?**

Forms will be delivered to households between 28 July, 2001 and 5 August, 2001. Census collectors will return to collect your form from 8 August 2001.

#### **How does the ABS ensure my privacy?**

The census collects information relating to each person and household in the country but it is not concerned with information about individuals as such. The census is taken to provide

information about the community as a whole and about groups within the community. The public expects that the information they provide will be kept confidential and this protection is given by provisions in the Census and Statistics Act 1905. The census is confidential but not anonymous. The Census and Statistics Act 1905 (the Act) requires that the householder complete the form and take responsibility for its contents. Studies have shown that an "anonymous" census leads to much poorer statistics. Names are required in some circumstances to assist in coding of complex families, and to allow a quality check on census enumeration using another survey after the census. Addresses are required to ensure that forms are collected from all households. Once processing is completed all names and addresses are destroyed.

Completed census forms will be transferred from the collection centres to the Census Data Processing Centre under secure arrangements. Full-time security personnel will be employed to prevent any unauthorised access to the processing centre. Comprehensive security arrangements are implemented on the ABS computer system. These include the use of regularly changed passwords, access control and audit trails. In accordance with the Act, no results will be released in a way which would enable particular individuals or households to be identified.

### **What if I am not at home on Census Night?**

Wherever you are in Australia on census night, Tuesday 7 August, you are required to fill out a census form. This may not be where you usually live. The location at which you fill out the census form is known as your place of enumeration. Census counts by place of enumeration include information on overseas visitors for the variables age, sex and marital status. A special overseas visitor category has been created for the remaining variables since this information is not needed in detailed form for the delivery of services in Australia.

If you are not at home on census night, (you may be in a motel or at a friend's place), a question on the census form asks for your usual place of residence. This allows you to be counted at the dwelling in which you usually reside if you are temporarily absent. Usual residence counts can only be provided for people, not families or dwellings. These counts exclude visitors from overseas.

### **Why does it take so long from the time of collection to release the data ?**

Notwithstanding advancements in technology, there is still a relatively long lead time required to release census data. This is due to the essential activities involved in the collection, capture, coding, and validation of over 700 million responses to census questions. To facilitate these tasks, a centralised processing centre has been established and is staffed by about 1000 ABS officers. In late August 2001 they will commence the processes mentioned above and will continue for approximately 12 months.

Census data users can expect further improvements in timeliness to that achieved for the 1996 Census and an adherence to all advertised release dates for the 2001 Census. A **2001 Census release schedule** similar to the 1996 Census will be implemented for 2001 Census output.

## **The life of a census collector is never dull**

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Every five years, thousands of recruits get out into the field to go a-knock-knock-knocking on every door in the land - and it's just amazing what experiences they have and the stories they have to tell. Below are just a few of the stories that have come back from our collectors.

### **It's enough to give you the hump!**

A Census collector had the honour of visiting a hippie commune on his rounds near rural Parkes. He thought he was experiencing love not war when invited in for a cuppa, however on taking his leave, his faith was quickly shattered. As he walked out of the front door, he was confronted by a rampant bull camel who expressed disdain for the census by spitting all over the collector's yellow satchel. Yuk!

### **More animal antics**

A hotline Action Advice from a householder in Albany read: "Extra form required. Dog ate form and will continue to if people not home. Advice to the collector: Give dog a bone."

### **Case of the vanishing household**

A collector in Hervey Bay knocked on a household door and delivered a census form. When he returned to collect the form, it wasn't there. Neither was the door. Neither was the house. The house had been picked up and moved, leaving only a vacant block. Nothing had been left - not even a forwarding address.

### **Space-time dimension**

In answer to the census question: 'Length of residence in Australia', someone filled in: 'Thirty-two feet, including the verandah'.

### **Dough!**

A teenager opened the door and handed a \$20 note to a mystified collector. But I'm your census collector! Oh, sorry, I saw your yellow bag and thought you were delivering our pizza.

## **Thinking of using 2001 Census data in your future projects?**

### **Thinking of using 2001 Census data in your future projects?**

When the data you need isn't in the standard range of ABS products, you might consider ordering data customised to your requirements through the ABS Customised Table Service.

The ABS Customised Table Service provides cross-classified data tailored to meet individual clients requirements. Order your customised tables through the Advance Order Service (AOS) to receive your tables as soon as possible after the official release date.

The AOS allows you to specify and order census tables while the data is being processed. This ensures that table specifications are set up ready to run when the data is officially released in mid 2002. As demand for customised tables is high when the data is first

released, using the AOS will reduce waiting periods.

AOS information packs will be available from mid August 2001. Packs will contain all the information you need to specify and order tables, including an electronic copy of the **2001 Census Dictionary** (Cat. No. 2901.0) which provides information on the data variables and concepts. Printed copies of the 2001 Census Dictionary can be ordered through ABS bookshops (**order here**) or by calling our National Information and Referral Service on 1300 135 070.

Call 1800 813 939 to register for an AOS information pack. AOS orders will be taken from 3 September 2001 through to 30 November 2001.

### **Census Table Specification Service Available September 2001**

Users interested in 2001 Census customised tables will find the new Census Table Specification Service (CTSS) software to be an invaluable tool in specifying their tables. Users can download the software to their own desktop from either the ABS web site or CD-ROM and experiment with different table formats.

Using the CTSS will allow users to see what is possible with 2001 Census variables and their classificatory detail, and to get an idea of the associated cost of specified tables.

The service is restricted to the manipulation of data descriptions, and will not generate data values on-line. However, by showing users how the information is presented in the table, the CTSS will assist in minimising the time users take to specify and submit customised table requests.

Users can save and order the tables specified via this application prior to confirming final costs, and discussing any associated data issues, with an ABS Information Consultant.

## **Guiding users through the Census**

### **Guiding users through the Census**

From how census questions are developed, to defining classifications, through to samples of census products and services - information to assist users is in The Census Guide.

We understand that the entirety of the census can be both daunting and confusing for some users, and finding background information about the data can be time consuming.

This year, to assist users of census data, the ABS will be releasing The Census Guide, which contains a range of 2001 Census reference material and product information, all on one CD-ROM. The Census Guide will make it easier to find the required information and is an essential reference tool.

The Census Guide contains information such as:

- **2001 Census product release schedule**
- **2001 Census Dictionary** (Cat. No. 2901.0)
- **How Australia Takes a Census** (Cat. No. 2903.0)

- **2001 Directory of Census Statistics** (Cat. No. 2910.0)
- Census Product Briefs
- Census Information Papers, and much more.

The Census Guide also contains some free 1996 Census data - including data from 1996 Census Selected Characteristics Publications and the 1996 Census Basic Community Profile extracts - to give clients an indication of the data that will be available from the 2001 Census.

The Census Guide is due to be released in early September. To order your **free** copy call 1800 813 939.

## 2001 Directory of Census Statistics

### 2001 Directory of Census Statistics

The **2001 Directory of Census Statistics** (cat. no. 2910.0) will provide you with a preview of the products and services available from the 2001 census.

Although the first major data release will not occur until mid 2002, the Directory provides you with a description of the proposed products and services, an indicative price list and helpful census related reference material including:

- 2001 Census data variables
- 2001 Census Geographic Structure
- examples applications of census data
- definitions of common census terminology.

The first release of the Directory will be available in hardcopy, electronically via the ABS' **Census web page** and will also be contained in **The Census Guide**

If you would like to order a free hardcopy version of the 2001 Directory of Census Statistics call the Census Marketing Unit on 1800 813 939 or print off and fax/send back our ABS Bookshop **order form**.

## All 2001 Census Community Profile templates available now on the web!

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In the April 2001 edition of **Census Update**, we announced that templates for the 2001 Census Basic Community Profile (BCP), Time Series Profile (TSP) and Expanded Community Profile (XCP) were available on our web site.

The three remaining templates in the Census Community Profile series, the Indigenous Profile (IP), Working Population Profile (WPP) and Usual Residents Profile (URP) are now also accessible via the **Census web page** or by accessing this **2001 Census Community**

**Profile Templates** link.

Clients are again encouraged to take maximum advantage of the early release of the **2001 Census Community Profile Series** by considering standard output and customised needs, in preparation for the release of 2001 Census data in July 2002.

## Launch of the CDATA User Group

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The CDATA User Group web site was launched on June 28 this year. The User Group has been designed to communicate information on CDATA2001 developments and allow users to share their knowledge and expertise in the use and application of CDATA96 and later CDATA2001.

The CDATA User Group has two distinct areas: an Information Database and a Messageboard. The Information Database contains:

- information on CDATA96 and associated census products
- technical information on how to use CDATA96 with MapInfo
- information on the progress and development of CDATA2001 products
- links to census fact sheets and the **CDATA96 Hints and Tips** on the ABS web site.

The Messageboard is an interactive area where questions can be posted. Users have the opportunity to respond to questions posted by other registered members of the group. There are broad topics currently set up in the Messageboard which the friendly staff on the Census Technical Help Line believe are issues for discussion. The structure of the Messageboard is likely to change as more questions/issues are raised. Documents created by members of the User Group will automatically be visible to all other CDATA User Group members.

Benefits in becoming a member of the User Group include:

- direct e-mail notification of software developments via a newsletter
- access to discussion on census related conceptual and data issues
- regular newsletters detailing product development
- hints and tips on using CDATA
- invitations to CDATA user workshops and prototype demonstrations.

### How to register

Membership is free and open to anyone who has an interest in gaining the maximum value from CDATA. The **CDATA Newsletter** contains more information on the User Group. **Register now.**

## Join the Census e-mail alert list

**Join the Census e-mail alert list**



Would you like the convenience of being kept informed of the latest census developments and issues via e-mail? The new **census.users@abs.gov.au** is a service available to anyone interested in being kept up to date with census news. E-mails will be forwarded to you as important census information becomes available (e.g. product alerts and releases, etc.)

If you wish to be added to our e-mailing list, simply send an e-mail to **census.users@abs.gov.au** and type in the subject field "Add to census e-mail". If at any time you wish to be taken off the list type "Cancel census e-mail" in the subject heading.

## Proposed release dates for 2001

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**Proposed release dates** - Timetable for the release of 2001 Census products and services.

## About this Release

A periodic newsletter to keep clients informed of developments in Census products and services. Highlights recent and forthcoming releases, provides comments on census data and advises of user forums.

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